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The Creation and Impact of Mr. Agne's Career Collection

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The Creation and Impact of Mr. Agne's Career Collection

A Community Impact Project Focusing on Providing Students With Professional Attire.

Evelyn Hamady

Honors Project

Submitted to the Honors College
at Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for graduation with

April 21st, 2021

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What is the significance of providing professional clothing for students who may not have the financial stability to afford new clothing? How does Mr. Agne's Career Collection at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) operate to most efficiently serve students? What advancements have been made in this second year of the career collection to help promote more consistency and professionalism? This project works to explain the significance of the organization and what has been done over a few years to guarantee its success. The project also works to respond to the issue of lack of professional wear for students seeking job or internship opportunities. The project was conducted over the course of a few years, with the planning of the operation being done in spring 2019, a soft launch in fall 2020, and the store coming into full effect in spring 2020. This year the focus of the project has been on receiving donations, working on promoting the organization, creating an inventory system for the products, and serving the community.

Dressing professionally is one of the most important aspects of an interview, yet many college students do not have access to these resources, as after college may be the first time a student has a job in a professional setting. With college being a major time commitment, many students have limited time for work outside of school other than a minimum wage job or unpaid internship. This "does not leave [college students] much money to pay for more than room and board" (Staff, 2019), leaving students with almost no money for professional attire. It only takes about seven seconds for someone to make a first impression (Gibbons, 2018), so it is important when going into interviews, attending career fairs, or starting a first job that students and graduates have the resources they need to make a good one. Making this first impression a good one is an exact reason why career closets are becoming more and more prevalent amongst universities all across the country.

Universities everywhere are finding the importance in providing students with professional attire, as it only improves their students and alumni's chances of success. These career closets "provide students with donated professional business attire and, in some instances, accessories, for free, which they can use for interviews, career fairs and more" (Staff, 2019). Multiple universities such as Auburn University, Boston College, Wisconsin School of Business, and others have implemented free clothing closets that provide an array of clothing, anywhere from suits and dresses to bags and accessories. These universities are providing clothing to their students in multiple different ways as well. Auburn Universities supplies clothing to students through an in-person, physical space that can be attended by scheduling appointments through Handshake. This allows for the students to physically view the items and try them on before making a decision. Other colleges such as Boston College provide an online inventory where students can view products and then fill out a request form to obtain the pieces. The pieces students can obtain vary between colleges, as it depends on the inventory and size of the student population. Most of these universities provide these resources through donations from outside stores, faculty, alumni, or just generous local community members, which makes the array of attire limited. Due to this, sizes, colors, and pieces are not guaranteed in most career closets, as supplies are limited and inconsistent. To ensure the quality of all donated items, clothing is inspected for tears and stains, and to ensure that the clothing is something that will not look too dated or out of style. All of these aspects went into consideration when designing the career closet that has been open to students at Bowling Green State University since the Spring Semester of 2020.

Mr. Agne's Career Collection is a professional clothing donation center located in Eppler South 117 on BGSU's campus (See Appendix A), where students are allowed to receive one free

outfit once per year. The collection itself consists of dress shirts, dress pants, suiting, dresses, dress shoes, jewelry, purses, belts, ties, bowties, and socks (See Appendix B). Students are allowed to take home one of each object to create a full outfit that would be acceptable for an interview, career fair, etc. The room consists of two shelving units, a series of hooks, a mirror, a changing room for students to try on the clothes (See Appendix C), and a check-out desk. The collection is completely sourced from donations made to the school, either by local organizations or individuals.

The name of the Career Collection is in honor of Mr. Paul Agne, a well-known supporter of the Education and Human Development college. The reason Mr. Agne felt so passionately about giving to the students of BGSU is due to his own experience on campus. When Mr. Agne attended Bowling Green State University, he was on his way to withdrawal from classes due to his financial situation at the time, when he ran into the Dean of the college. After explaining his situation, the Dean walked over to the Bursar's office and paid the balance on his tuition for that semester. This situation impacted him so greatly that Mr. Agne himself felt it necessary to donate to something that directly benefited students, and when hearing the idea of the Career Collection, he was generous enough to financially support the project. Mr. Paul Agne graduated from Bowling Green State University in 1955 in Physical Education and is now a retired teacher.

Donations are the key component to the organization, as the center does not have a budget to purchase the inventory required for this type of operation. Donations are made either by organizations like Brighton Collectibles or by other professionals or alumni who are looking to trade in their professional clothing (See Appendix L). Donors are given a form to fill out to keep track of who has donated what, and these forms include basic information like the name, address, phone number, etc. of the donor. The donations are then sorted through to look for

anything that might reduce the professionalism of the garment. Such things include tears, stains, faded spots, scratches, or anything that does not live up to the standards of the collection.

Anything that can not be used is then either offered to students or kept in the Fashion Merchandising and Product Development Ready to Wear Collection to be used in Technical Design and Visual Merchandising classes. Once the donation has been sorted and inspected, the items being donated will be steamed and then sorted into inventory.

Starting the Fall Semester of 2020, Mr. Agne's Career Collection implemented a new inventory system that is connected to the BGSU database (See Appendix F). The inventory system is logged into by using any BGSU account given permission to access, making it convenient for students to use in the future. The inventory system is used to track merchandise that is physically in the store, as well as record what items have been chosen by students and who donated those items. The inventory system has four main sections, which are Add Item, Inventory, Checkout, and Search Client. Under the Add Item section, the inventory is sorted through a series of prompts which include what type of item it is, the gender the item was designed for, the size, the color of the item, and a range of how the item would be priced. After this, a title, description, and tag number are given to the item, and a donator's name is also given to the item. Once placed in the inventory, the item is tagged with the tag number, title, and size for the item to be found easily in the system when chosen by a student (See Appendix G). The item can then be found under the Inventory section, as well as all other items in the system. Students can then be checked out under the Checkout section, and all the items that the students chose will be recorded in this section, and then will be removed from the available inventory. Finally, the section named Search Clients is used to look up past client information and what items they chose from past inventory. This inventory system was a crucial advancement in Mr.

Agne's Career Collection this year, as it increases efficiency and the student's experience. It allows for a quicker checkout process than recording everything by hand like before, and it allows the user to have more visibility with the inventory. The entire inventory currently in the system was all done this year, which amounts to over one hundred items put into the system by hand.

Another aspect of this project revolves around creating different marketing pieces for the Career Collection. One way the Career Collection is currently trying to market itself is through putting up signage around campus to direct students to the location. The original signage that Mr. Agne's Career Collection used was a foldable, plastic sign that would be placed outside whenever the store was open (See Appendix I). This sign ran into some issues when dealing with the wind, as it was very sturdy. Since then, the Career Collection has moved on to using lawn signs with metal legs that go into the ground, in an attempt to deal with the Bowling Green wind (See Appendix J). These signs were a crucial part of the project, as more and more students were attracted to the location with the increase in signage. The Career Collection also uses social media as a form of marketing. Mr. Agne's Career Collection is currently on Instagram, where one can find multiple images of the store, items currently in the store, and donations that have been made (See Appendix H). The posts always include something going on with the store during the week, the location of the Career Collection, and the hours the store will be open. The Instagram page is also open to direct messaging in case students need to make an appointment outside the regular hours. The store also uses Instagram and email to arrange when donations will be brought to campus and to keep in touch with those who donate frequently. Communication and social media platforms have been a very important part of the project, especially due to the limitations that have been brought on due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The pandemic brought on many changes to the project when compared to the original proposal. One thing that changed from the proposal was the number of students on campus. Due to social distancing and a reduced amount of in-person classes, there were very few students who would be on campus to access the collection. Students on campus are exposed to several signs pointing in the direction of the Career Collection and therefore are made aware of its existence. Students off-campus would not necessarily know what to look for, making the collection less accessible. As a result of this, there are very few customers who stop in or make an appointment with the Career Collection than what was expected in the proposal.

The use of mannequins was also something that changed over the two semesters of work for multiple reasons. The intended use of the mannequins in the Career Collection was to display items from the store so students could envision what the clothes may look like when styled (See Appendix E). The mannequins eventually had to be removed, as they were hard to move from outside the store back into the store, and were becoming damaged being left outside the store when not open. These changes were not originally planned for when creating the proposal, but eventually, the mannequins were removed and put into storage.

The amount of volunteers is also a variable that changed when compared to the proposal. Most colleges strive to have their career closets open during most hours of the day, to ensure that their students have time to attend if possible. Due to both issues with social distancing and students not being on campus, the BGSU Career Collection only has two volunteers, limiting the hours the collection is available. This changed from the intended proposal, as eventually, it would be great if Mr. Agne's Career Collection could be open during all hours of the day.

As Mr. Agne's Career Collection grows in the future, multiple things can be done to improve the quality and effectiveness of the store. One thing that could affect the longevity of the

store would be to implement a monetary donation system. This would be for students, alumni, faculty, or anyone else visiting the Career Collection. This would be a completely optional donation that the Career Collection could use to help pay for multiple expenses around the store, such as signage, hangers, and many other miscellaneous expenses. The Career Collection would still be a free service to students, but the option for a donation would always be available.

In addition to this, another advancement that the Career Collection could implement would be to expand the number of resources provided to include interview materials, like pens, paper, folders, etc. This could be done in a multitude of ways. One way the Career Collection could make this happen is to work with BGSU to supply students with BGSU marketed pens and notebooks that students could take into interviews or career fairs. In addition to this, Mr. Agne's Career Collection could work with the Office of Campus Sustainability and their program called "When You Move Out, Don't Throw It Out." The Office of Campus Sustainability could donate collection pens and notebooks that would be suitable for an interview to the Career Collection, and these items could be handed out to all customers. This would be a great way to ensure BGSU's students are successful in all areas when it comes to the professional world.

The final potential goal for the Career Collection would be to potentially expand the size of the store. The Career Collection currently has bags and bags of donations, but due to the store's size, the donations are unable to be sorted and moved into the store. It would be in the best interest of not only the Career Collection, but also of the students if the store was able to expand, that way, new styles, sizes, and items could be on display. This would also allow for more students to visit the store at one time, as currently there is only one fitting room available for students. If more space was able to be dedicated to the store, more students would be able to be served, thereby utilizing all that the store has to offer.

Overall, this project shows that there is a need for universities to provide students clothing, as oftentimes professional attire is expensive and financially out of reach. This project addresses this need for providing students with professional clothing and looks to other universities to see what else can be done to improve students' success. The project will continue to grow as more donations are made and more students are served. It is in the Career Collection's best interest to continue to make advancements to the collection, to provide the best experience for their students. Providing professional clothing not only looks good for the student, but also for the university from which they come. The work done so far by Mr. Agne's Career Collection is only the beginning, and hopefully will continue to serve students for years and years to come.

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Timeline

Designing and Creation of the Career Collection	Fall 2018-Fall 2019
Collection of Donations to Open	Fall 2018- Spring 2020
Original Opening of the Career Collection	Spring 2020
Photoshoot for Promotional Images	Spring 2020
Began Physical Work in the Career Collection	Fall 2020
Organizing the Career Collection by Size and Color	September 2020
Redressed the Mannequins from Last Year	September 2020
Instagram Posts	September- November 2020
Styled Students	October 2020
Picked Up and Sorted Donations	October 2020
Inventory System is Created	November 2020
Items Begin to be Placed in Inventory System	November- December 2020
Replaced Signage	January 2021
Trained New Student in Using the Inventory System	January- February 2021
Received and Sorted Donations	January- March 2021
Styled Students	February- April 2021
Instagram Posts	February- April 2021
Completed Project	April 2021

Appendix

Appendix A: Photo of the Entrance to the Collection



Appendix B: Photo of the Merchandise Displayed Inside the Store



Appendix C: Photo of Dressing Room




Appendix D: Styled Customer Order



Appendix E: Mannequins Used for Displays



Appendix F: Inventory System


EDHD WEB PORTAL

[f](#)
[t](#)
[p](#)
[v](#)
[h](#)

[ACADEMICS](#)
[ADMISSIONS](#)
[ABOUT](#)
[ATHLETICS](#)
[ALUMNI](#)
[RESEARCH](#)
[STUDENT LIFE](#)
[LIBRARIES](#)

[GIVE](#)
[MYBGSU](#)
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[SEARCH](#)

MyEDHD

- My Info
- My Contact Info
- Live Directory

Technology & Resource Center

- myTRC

Forms

- Scholarships
- Field Placement Attendance
- Personal Data Record
- Methods Request
- Student Teaching Request
- Advanced Field Placement

Dispositions Form

Logout ehamadv

MR. AGNE'S CAREER COLLECTION



Add Item



Inventory

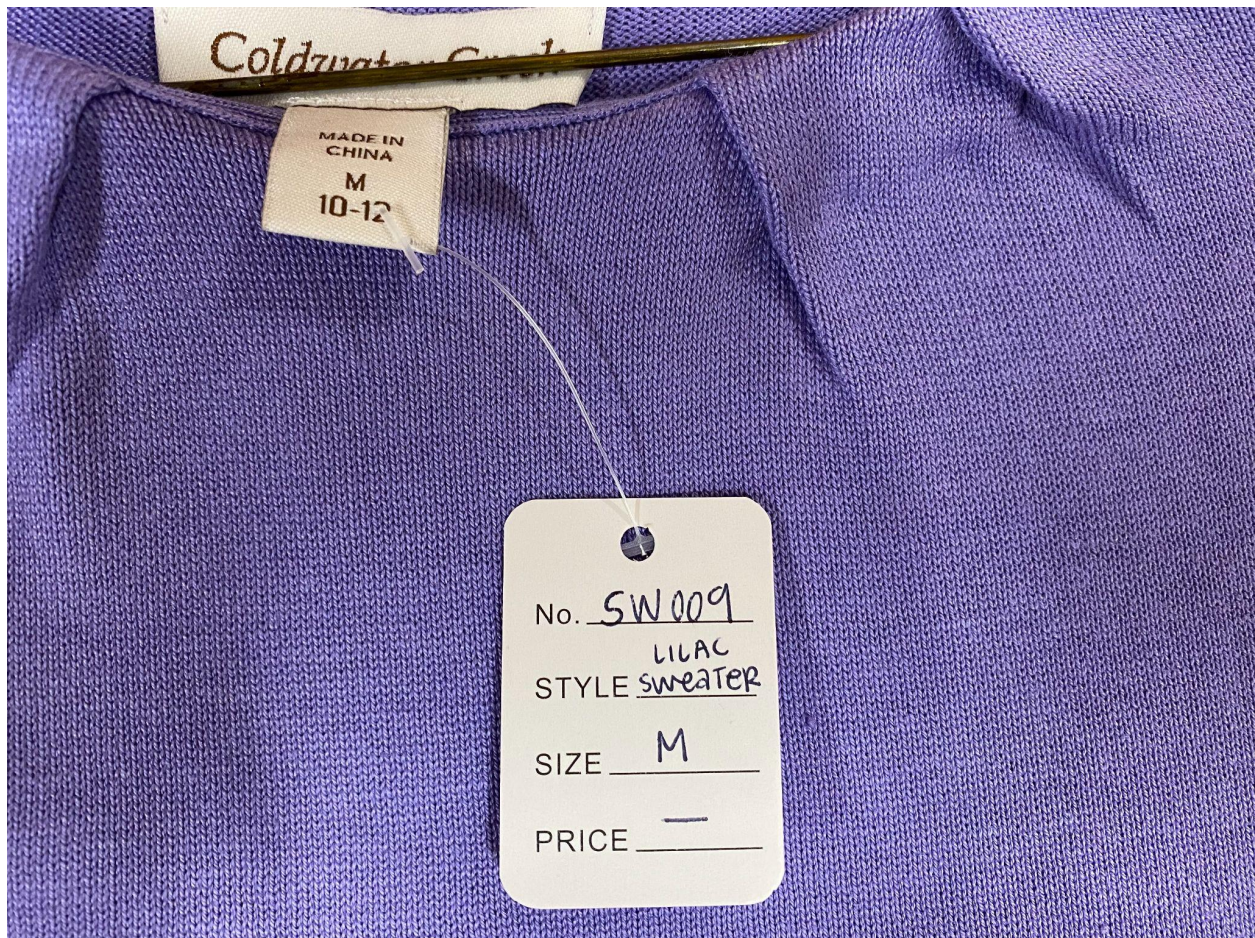


Checkout

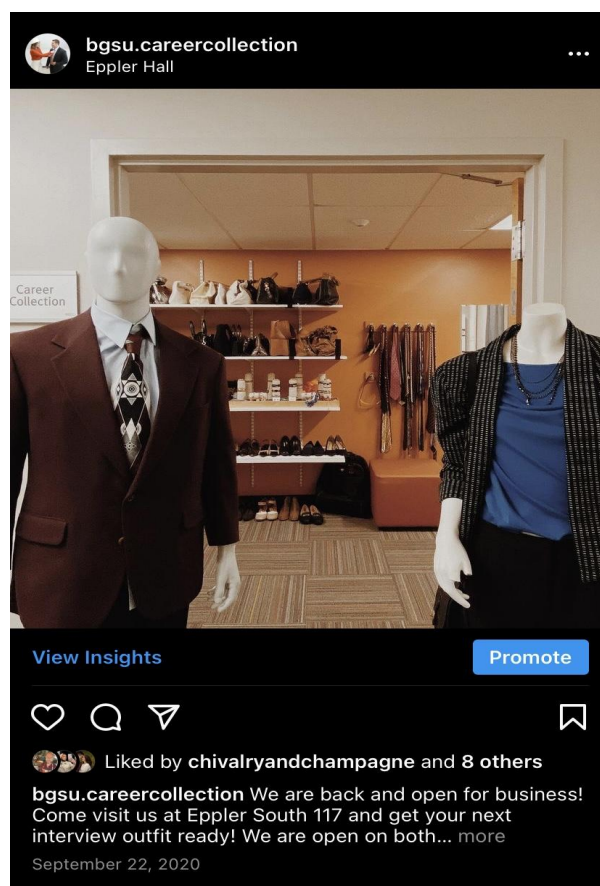
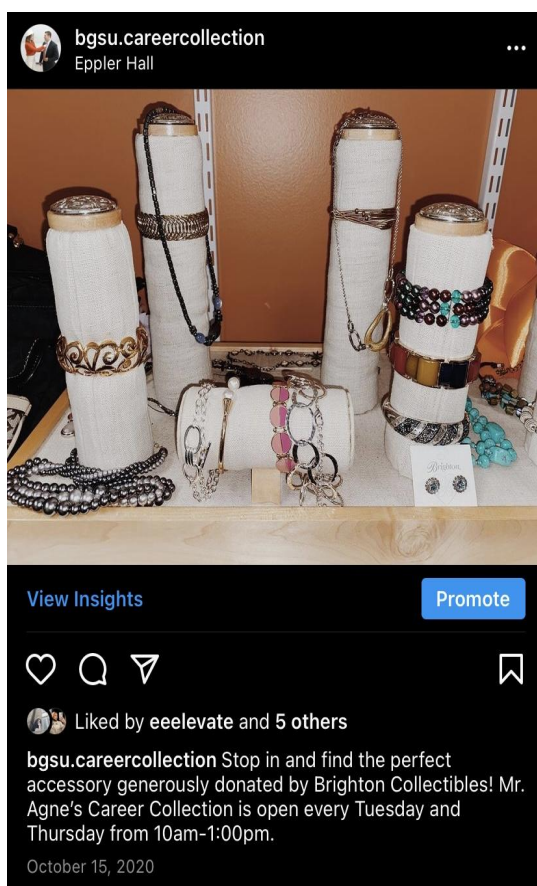
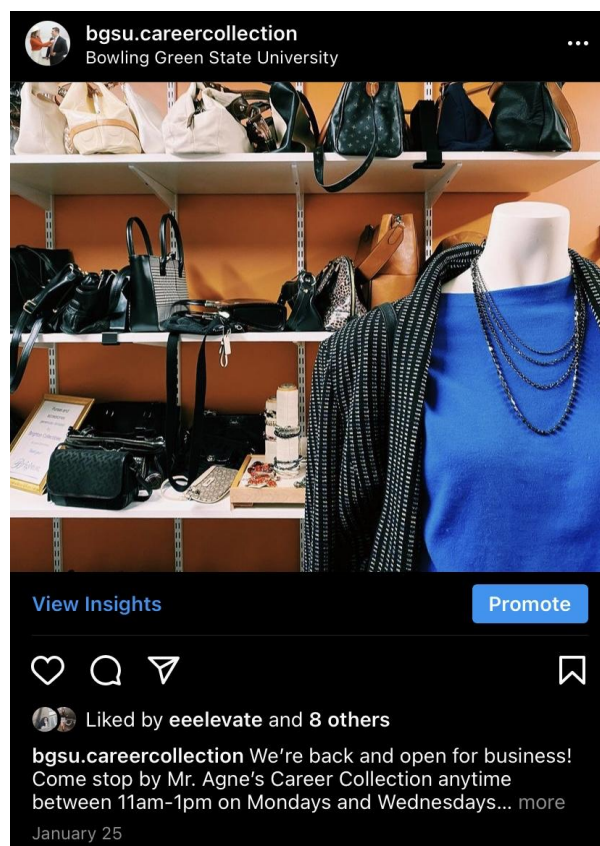
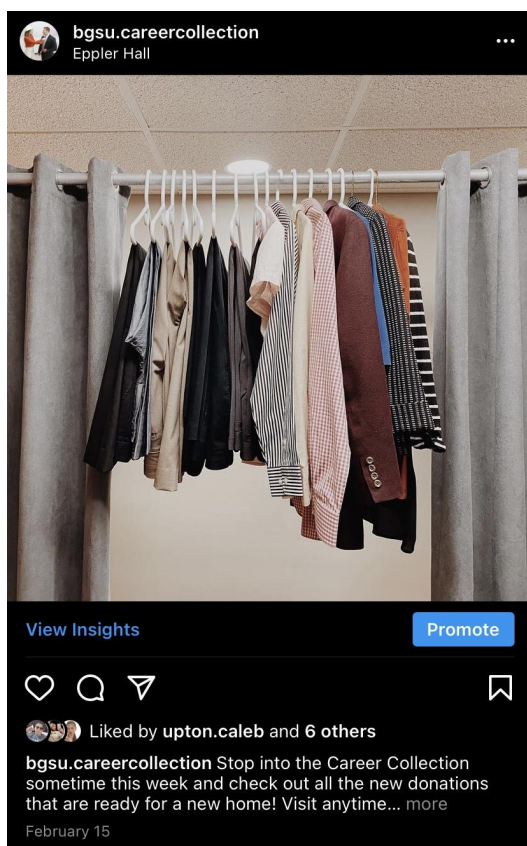


Search Clients

Appendix G: Garment Tags



Appendix H: Instagram Posts



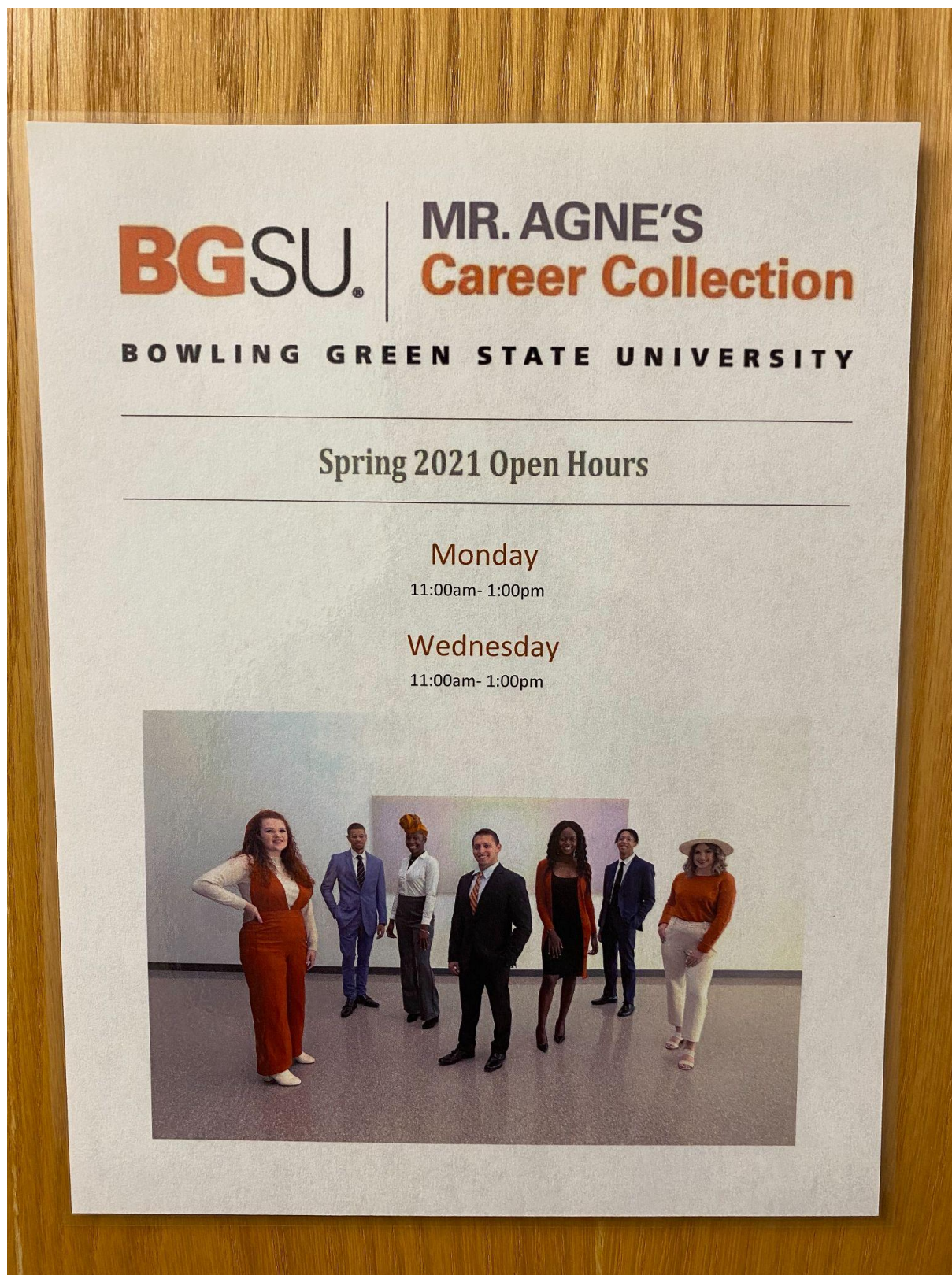
Appendix I: Original Signage



Appendix J: Modified Signage



Appendix K: Operation Hours Signage



Appendix L: Unsorted Donation Storage

